KGOSI SEBEGO – THE HARD-HEARTED CROCODILE by JEFF RAMSAY[1]

"Kelela fela, gakeare nkgapang; kelela ketsosa beng-gae; lopotolgwa kemadi atlhokweng, ke kwena eepelo ethata, Sebego aMmakhuto aMokwena." ("I merely cry out, I do not say 'seize me'; I cry out to arouse the village headmen; you are surrounded by bloodshed in the grass, by the hard-hearted crocodile, son of MaKhuto Mokwena.")[2]

From 1824 to 1844 Sebego I was the Motswaraledi-Kgosi or Regent of the main faction of the Bangwaketse *morafe* (plural *merafe* – Tswana polity or tribe). His two-decade reign coincided with the period of violent region-wide conflict that is commonly, albeit controversially, referred to as the *Mfecane* or *Difaqane* era of Southern African history. During this time of tumult, Sebego distinguished himself as a military leader. At the beginning of his reign, he mobilized an army of over 4000 to expel Sebetwane's Makololo horde from southern Botswana. Subsequently, he waged a prolonged war of resistance against Mzilikazi's Amandebele, whom he defeated at Dutlwe. Thereafter, he advanced into western Botswana, in the process driving the Ovaherero and Moruakgomo's Bakwena out of the area, while ruthlessly subjugating local communities. When he visited him in 1843, the missionary David Livingstone considered Sebego to be the region's preeminent ruler.

For his documented military exploits alone, Sebego deserves to be remembered among the pantheon of Southern Africa's notable early 19th-century warrior kings,

alongside such peers as Mzilikazi, Sebetwane, Soshangane, and Shaka. Yet in his homeland of Botswana, he has become a largely forgotten figure

The Lion in Winter – Makaba II

Makaba o nakaladi ya Makapana; Nakaladi ya Moshana kgethisa. Ke palame Tlowe, ke bala metsana, Ka re seo se ga se metse, metsanyana, Motse go setse wag a Rramaomana a Mokube." ("Makaba you are the land between Makapana and Moshana, levy tribute. I climbed Tlowe hill and counted the villages, they were merely hamlets, the only big village left is that of the Threatener of Mokube hill.")[3]

Sebego's assumption of leadership over the Bangwaketse was an outcome of the battlefield death of his father, the *Kgosi* (traditional leader/king/chief) Makaba II.[4] who before his demise had established himself as the most feared Batswana ruler of his time. Praised as the "*Thupa ya Moleta*" ("The Rod of Moleta") and "*Rramaomana*" ("Threatener" or "Menace") for his martial aptitude, throughout his long reign (c.1790-1824) Makaba fought against almost all of his neighbours, with his *mephato* or regiments usually prevailing.[5] During most of his rule, he was settled at Kanye and/or around its nearby hills, which he fortified with stone walls. His defences proved their worth when the Bangwaketse were attacked in 1798-99 by the Barolong boo-Ratlou, who were accompanied by gun-wielding Korana and Griqua led by Jan Bloem.[6] Notwithstanding their lack of firearms, the Bangwaketse defeated the invaders. Makaba's next victory was against the Bakgatla bagaMmanaana of Kgosi Kalaota II, who thereafter became his vassal, settling at Gamafikana adjacent to Kanye.

Makaba II's growing power resulted in a grand alliance against him, which included the combined *mephato* of the Bahurutshe, Balete, Bakgatla bagaKgafela, Bakwena, Batlhaping, and Batlaro, as well as some Korana. In the face of this challenge, he once more relied on the walls of his Kanye stronghold. A final assault by his opponents was beaten off in a fierce battle at Mathabanelo (in the Southern District). For several years thereafter Makaba's neighbours tried to prevent any European or Griqua traders from reaching Gangwaketse. But Makaba II overcame these efforts in 1824 when he hosted the missionary Robert Moffat and the Griqua leader Barend Barends. Like other dikgosi at the time, he wished to enter into direct trading contact with the Cape so that he could gain access to European goods, of which the most desired and feared in equal measure were guns.[7]

Towards the end of his rule, Makaba's position was complicated by his estrangement from his heir Tshosa. After failing in an attempt to usurp *bogosi* or kingship, the prince fled to his in-laws, the Barolong booRatshidi, his wife

Mojankunyane being the daughter of the Morolong royal Marumolwa aMakgetla. In his flight Tshosa was accompanied by a body of supporters, including his younger brother Segotshane. Thereafter, Tshosa convinced some Barolong to join him in raiding his father's cattle posts. Makaba sent out mephato in pursuit, who surrounded the raiders. Although Makaba had reportedly ordered that no harm should befall his prodigal son, he was nonetheless killed in the engagement.

In 1823 Makaba II also fought off an initial incursion of a warrior horde led by the Bafokeng bagaPatsa Kgosi Sebetwane.[8] Originally referred to as the "*Makgare*" the invaders would subsequently become known as the "Makololo." Sebetwane returned in the following year, defeating the Bakwena then under the regent Moruakgomo at Molepolole.

Meanwhile, there were further undercurrents of dissension among the Bangwaketse. A headman named Mogongwa was punished after it was revealed that he had paid tribute to Makaba's son Sebego, rather than to the Kgosi himself. In the aftermath of his late heir Tshosa's rebellion, the aging Kgosi would have been sensitive to the ambitions of the charismatic Sebego, who was the senior son of Makaba's second house, his mother being Matshadi the daughter of Sekokotla aMakaba I. Sebego's potential path to bogosi was by then blocked by the late Tshosa's two underage heirs, Gaseitsiwe and Ralekoko. But, in the absence of Segotshane, only Makaba stood between him and the defacto power of regency.

Following his punishment, Mogongwa found refuge among the Bakwena at Molepolole, only to find his hosts living in the shadow of Sebetwane. By some accounts he then approached Sebetwane himself, suggesting out of spite that the elder Makaba was rich and vulnerable.

What is more certain is that Moruakgomo's emissaries approached Makaba suggesting that they combine their forces against Sebetwane. The Bangwaketse Kgosikgolo (paramount ruler or king) then agreed to set off with his mephato to rendezvous with the Bakwena to confront Sebetwane at Losabanyana.

Some sources affirm that Makaba had been advised by leading Bangwaketse to remain behind at Kgwakgwe, arguing that he was too old for battle and also that Moruakgomo was not to be trusted. Such fears proved to be well-founded.

The battle began with the Bangwaketse pushing the Makalolo back, in the process wounding Sebetwane in the chest. (Years later, on July 7, 1851, Sebetwane died of a chest ailment following an equestrian accident that some speculated had caused trauma to the old wound).

But, with Moruakgomo's Bakwena remaining aloof from the fighting, the tide of the battle turned. It has been alleged that Sebego's Malau regiment, along with the Maabakgomo of Segotshane (who may have returned, only to flee once more to the Barolong after the battle) and what was left of the late Tshosa's Matshelelaphala, all failed to come to the aid of Makaba when his own Matshologawere were threatened by a Makololo counter-attack.

In the end, the Bangwaketse are said to have suffered heavy losses, with Makaba numbering among the slain. Whether the Kgosikgolo was killed by the enemy or, either by chance or design, abandoned and/or trampled to death by his own troops has been a long-running, but inconclusive debate. Perhaps inevitably, the Rod of Moleta's death gave rise to conspiracy theories in the oral traditions of the Bangwaketse and their neighbours. Some of these accounts may have been fuelled by subsequent political conflicts. For others, only an act of supreme betrayal could explain the downfall of the otherwise invincible warrior king.

Sebego takes command

"Kemmoditswe ke Thupa aMoleta, ke Makabe RraBarekwakang; bare ngwana wagaMatshadi oetsa thwadi, oetsa thalebodiba, Sekokotla. ("*I was asked about him by the Rod of Moleta, by Makaba (II), father of Barekwakong; they said, Matshadi's child acts like a leader. He moves like a whirligig beetle, Sekokotla.*")[9]

Notwithstanding Makaba's death, the outcome of Losabanyana was not entirely one-sided. The engagement reportedly ended with both Sebego and the wounded Sebetwane breaking off the engagement to regroup their exhausted armies.

In the aftermath of the regicide at Losabanyana, there was no opposition among the Bangwaketse as Sebego, the son of Makaba II and Matshadi, assumed the regency on behalf of his nephew Gaseitsiwe the son of his brother Tshosa and Mojankunyane. This occurred in the context of the continued exile among the Barolong of the late Tshosa's maternal brother Segotshane. Embedded in this dynastic circumstance were the seeds of future controversy. Sebego's initial acts as Motshwareledi-Kgosi were, however, well accepted as he kept his father's morafe together to fight another day.

During the first months of Sebego's reign, the Bangwaketse remained at Kgwakgwe hill. But, in the austral-winter of 1826, the settlement was largely destroyed during a Makololo attack, causing the morafe to resettle at Selokolela. In the aftermath of this setback, Sebego began preparations for a massive counter-strike on the Sebetwane's stronghold at Dithubaruba.

Sebego's plan was audacious. Dithubaruba hill is a natural fortress that is only easily approachable from its western side, which at the time was kept well-guarded. Sebego planned to march an army of over 4000 undetected to the hill to scale its southern, eastern, and northern approaches under the cover of darkness. In so doing he would position his forces for a surprise dawn attack. In his planning, the Mongwaketse must have calculated that Sebetwane would not anticipate such a bold move from a recently defeated foe.

Local accounts of Kgosi Sebego's campaign against the Makololo are greatly augmented by the journal entries of Andrew Geddes Bain.[10] Bain was a trader from the Cape Colony who, with his partner John Biddulph and five others (three Griqua and two Batlhaping all armed), accompanied the Bangwaketse on their campaign. His journal provides us with arguably the most detailed picture of any indigenous iron age military formation in Southern Africa during the Difaqane/Mfecane era.

Bain and Biddulph had come to Gangwaketse for the commercial purpose of acquiring ivory and other game products. Following in his father's footsteps, Sebego had been eager to establish trading links with the Cape via the *makgoa*, or white traders who were beginning to travel into the highveld north of the Orange River. In the case of Bain and Biddulph's timely appearance, he was further determined that they and their guns should join him in his imminent expedition against Sebetwane.

Having passed through the site of the previous clash between the Bangwaketse and Makololo, which Bain described as a valley strewn with the skulls of the fallen, the visitors were reluctant to become involved with the Kgosikgolo's expedition.

At Selokolela, they were greeted by a welcoming party led "by the King's two brothers" who brought with them a large bag of madila *"as much as two men could carry, part of which they poured out in their hands and tasted to show that there was no poison".* A cow for slaughter was also sent, while sentinels were posted to guard the visitor's wagons. The guests were further informed that the Kgosikgolo would join them at the moonrise. Bain and Biddulph reciprocated by giving their hosts presents of tobacco and other goods.

The identities of Sebego's two supposed "brothers" were Kowe and Malmanyana, who at the time served as two of his most trusted lieutenants. Neither was an actual blood brother of the Kgosi. Kowe was a paternal uncle of Sebego's brother-in-law, the Bakgatla bagaMmanaana Kgosi Kontle II, the son of Kalaota II.

As promised, the Kgosikgolo arrived at the visitors' camp with the light of the moon on his shoulders. After honouring his guests by pulling their noses and allowing them to do the same to him (an old customary form of special greeting), Sebego apologized for what he claimed to be the poor condition of his people's homes, asserting that the Makololo had but recently destroyed "the comfortable dwellings they had been accustomed to."

Bain's initial description of Sebego:

"His appearance is very prepossessing, rather above common size, with a remarkable easy carriage, and his tout ensemble [overall impression] majestic; his [facial] features were remarkably European, colour a dark brown, with woolly hair like the rest of the Bechuana or Negro tribes. Round his head – as an antidote against the headache, with which he was troubled – he wore a large snake's skin, the bright colours of which formed a pleasing contrast to that of his face.

"He was dressed in a jackal's Kabo & in his hand carried a handsome battle axe. On his legs, ankles & wrists he wore a great number of copper rings & bracelets of beautiful workmanship, and on his legs, just below his knees, similar rings, some of which he told us he made himself. Round his ankles were four rows of beads of virgin gold, which he said he had taken from a Mantatee chief he had killed in battle."

The subsequent dinner conversation confirmed that the Batlhaping and Barolong had, as in the past, tried to discourage the Makgoa from visiting the Bangwaketse. But, Bain and Biddulph had been reassured by the Rev. Moffat, with whom they had stayed at Kudumane, before venturing north.

In further discussion, Sebego wasted little time in informing the visitors that their arrival had come on the eve of his campaign to finally liberate the country from the Makololo. He further insisted that they join him on the expedition, observing that their generous exchange of presents was proof of their friendship, adding for good measure:

"You have accepted and given presents to us & we look upon you as our friends. If you are then what you pretend to be you will join us against the common enemy of mankind".

This was followed throughout the evening and the next day by further lobbying on Sebego's part, in which he combined pleasantries with firmness:

"You are now in my dominion and consequently under my orders. Every respect shall be shown you and you shall be treated as great Captains, as you certainly are, but it is my pleasure that you join us to eradicate from the face of the earth the plunderers of this and all other kingdoms before you can again return to your own country."

There were further inducements:

"Sibigho now presented us with an elephant's tooth of at least 90 lbs. weight & in return we gave him some of our best beads & trinkets. We could scarcely think that all this kindness was from disinterested motives, as we soon found it was but a preamble to the Mantatee attack."

Through such persuasion, the Kgosikgolo eventually got his way.

On other matters, while among the Bangwaketse Bain observed that Sebego at the time was said to already have sixteen wives. Bangwaketse sources, however, generally focus on three wives.

Sebego's senior wife was the princess Mogatsamosidi, who was the daughter of the Bangwato Kgosi Kgari.[11] The known surviving offspring of this marriage were four daughters: Bagomi, Motlalepula, Mogatsakgari and Mogatsasechele.

His second wife Sedie, was the daughter of a Mokwena named Kgwatalala, who was the mother of his senior son and ultimate heir Senthufe.

His third known wife was Setilwane, the daughter of the Bakgatla bagaMmanaana headman Mookodi, who was a junior son of Kgosi Kalaota II. She bore him two more sons, Rankwane and Morwatshisi, and a daughter named Kesebyang.

As previously observed, Sebego's links with the Bakgatla bagaMmanaana were further solidified by the marriage of his maternal sister Berekonyane aMakaba II to Kgosi Kontle II. Berekonyane was the mother of Mosielele from whom the modern BagaManaana royals of Gamafikana, Moshupa and Thamaga all claim direct descent.

In his journals, Bain was further impressed by the size and quality of Sebego's cattle herd, despite the Kgosi's insistence that the Bangwaketse now had no cattle as compared to the time of his father Makaba due to the Makololo. Bain noted what he described as the remarkable size of the horns on the oxen, apparently referring to the "Ngologo" stock.

March on Dithubaruba

Sebego's army, initially consisting of some 3,000 men, who included Bakgatla bagaMmanaana as well as Bangwaketse, finally set off from Selokolela on the 25th of August, 1826. Bain was impressed by what he saw:

"We could not help admiring the good order and discipline which prevailed among the people & the alacrity with which the Chief's orders were executed."

In his journal he went on to further describe the Bangwaketse warriors in some detail:

"Their dress consisted of a panther's [leopard/nkwe] hide thrown carelessly over their shoulders; a lynx's [thwane] skin suspended round their neck and cut in oval form, covered the lower part of the body. A white tuft of goat's hair made in the shape of the sun and a plume of ostrich feathers crowned their head which, from the way they were covered with sebilo and fat, a good deal resembled a steel helmet when exposed to the rays of the sun.

"Each had a shield of white ox-hide, generally with a black or brown spot in the middle, to which were fastened 3 to 6 assegais. It is suspended from the Chacka or battle-axe which they carry on their left shoulders and dangles at their backs, the shafts of the assegais being upwards and the blades fixed in the pocket of the bottom of the shield."

Bain's description of the battle dress and armaments of Sebego's troops is consistent with other early nineteenth-century accounts and illustrations of local Batswana. Contrary to Bantu Education mythology, short stabbing spears (diputlela/segai), as well as long throwing spears (marumo), were used by Batswana long before their pop culture association with Shaka Zulu.

Of the Setswana throwing spears, another early trader in Botswana, Gordon Cumming, noted that they were generally six feet [1.8 metres] long but quite light, adding: *"a skillful warrior will send one through a man's body at one hundred yards* [90+ metres]".[12]

The battle axe or tshaka, knobkerrie, and long knife generally completed a warrior's armament.

By the early 19th- century the shields of the larger merafe in Botswana were neither of the long Amazulu type nor the smaller four-pointed protectors traditionally favoured by Basotho and Batlhaping. Instead, they were of medium size and oval shape. In contrast to the mostly white ox hide shields of the

Bangwaketse, Bakwena at the time preferred grey buffalo (nare) skin, known examples of Batawana shields were of black and white ox hide, while Bangwato mephato often used the hides of giraffe as well as buffalo.

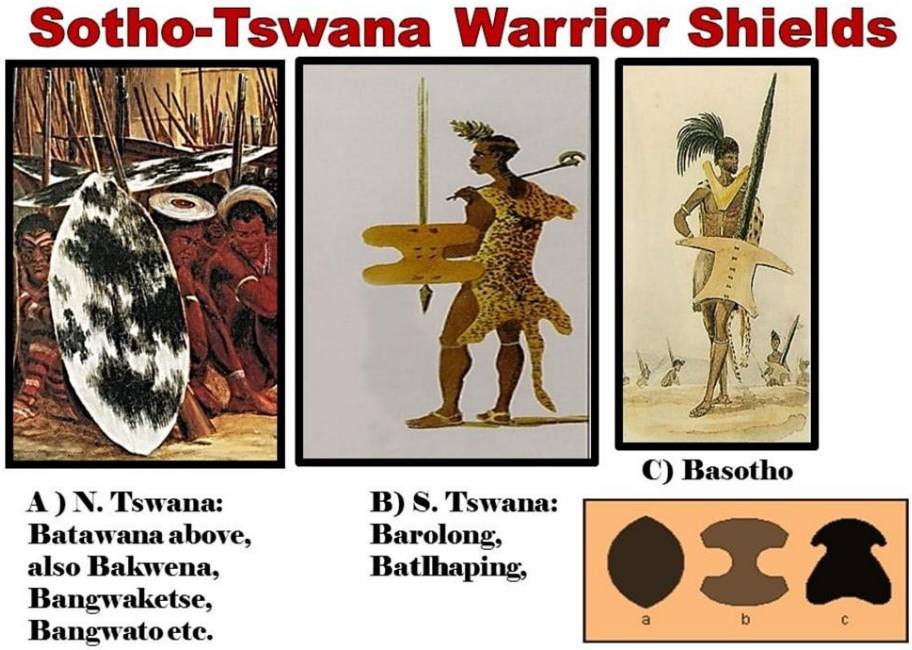

Fig. 1. Examples of shields favoured among early 19th-century Sotho-Tswana warriors

Notwithstanding its current reserved status as a manifestation of royalty, the leopard skin cloak was at the time, at least among the western Batswana merafe, also commonly worn by senior men as well as the Kgosi. In this respect the cloaks were worn together with long aprons, covering the chest and loins (in addition to a leather lebante) made from karosses of other spotted animals. The legs of warriors were often adorned with copper wire bangles and beads, while their feet were protected by sandals.

Distinctive headdresses, often incorporating ostrich feathers were used to distinguish between the warriors of different ranks and merafe, with white feathers sometimes being reserved for those of higher rank.

Around their necks, the men invariably suspended their charms (dipheko), medicines (ditlhare), and good luck dice, along with *"gourd snuff boxes made of an extremely diminutive species of pumpkin, trained to grow in a bottle-like shape."*

After setting off from Selokolela, the army marched for about two hours through densely wooded hill country before coming upon a relatively open spot. There, Sebego seated himself on high ground and gave a signal. Bain observed:

"In an instant, to our utter astonishment, the whole army squatted down in the form of a crescent, himself [Sebego] in the centre and one of his brothers [i.e., Kowe and Malmanyana] on each side of him. When they were all seated, he looked around and without rising up called out Hey! Hey! And his two brothers whistling through their teeth, all was in a moment dead silence. He then commenced a long harangue which seemed principally addressed to the right wing, then turning to the left he addressed them in a similar manner."

For the rest of the advance on Dithubaruba, the mephato maintained the integrity of the two wings or "horns". This formation should be familiar to students of Shaka Zulu as the so-called "horns of the buffalo" pattern.

As with the stabbing spear, the formation's local use predates the time of the first Amazulu Nkosi, e.g., the Banyayi-Bakalanga ruler Mambo Nichasike I (Changamire) employed the tactic against the Portuguese a century and a half before both Sebego and Shaka. With variations, it can be further found in accounts of other Iron Age battle encirclements of the pre-industrial conflicts in Asia and Europe, as well as Africa.

The formation would appear to have its local origin as a communal hunting strategy often employed by larger more militarized morafe, such as the Bangwaketse. Once the mephato were gathered the horns would be ordered to spread out for several kilometres on both the left and right flanks before coming together to entrap the game.

In the case of Sebego's mephato, it allowed them to provision themselves while advancing on the enemy. Evidence from the march further underscores the fact that for a large conventional force on the offense, a circular advance had the obvious strategic advantage of all but eliminating the possibility that the advancing army would fall prey to a sudden ambush by a better-positioned opposition. Thus, it was that Bain on the morning of the 25th of August reported:

"The Captains with their companies from the right filed off to the left, passing the front of the semi-circular phalanx in the greatest order and regularity. Similar orders were issued to those on the left who branched off in the opposite direction &, and when about equal distance from the main body, both went off at a double quick march...Having allowed the right and left wings time to advance and scour the country to an extent of at least three miles on each side of us in the semi-circular form as they had been seated on the ground, we continued our march with the Chief at the centre, having appointed the place to close in on the game to be Matlhoshane [near Moshupa]. A little before sunset the hunters closed together at Matlhoshane, where we were to encamp for the night, and killed 33 quaggas [now extinct type of Zebra] Elands and Wildebeests."

Once the slaughter was completed, the meat was brought to Sebego for distribution. But before they could enjoy their feast the men were given the signal to establish and secure through camouflage their encampment.

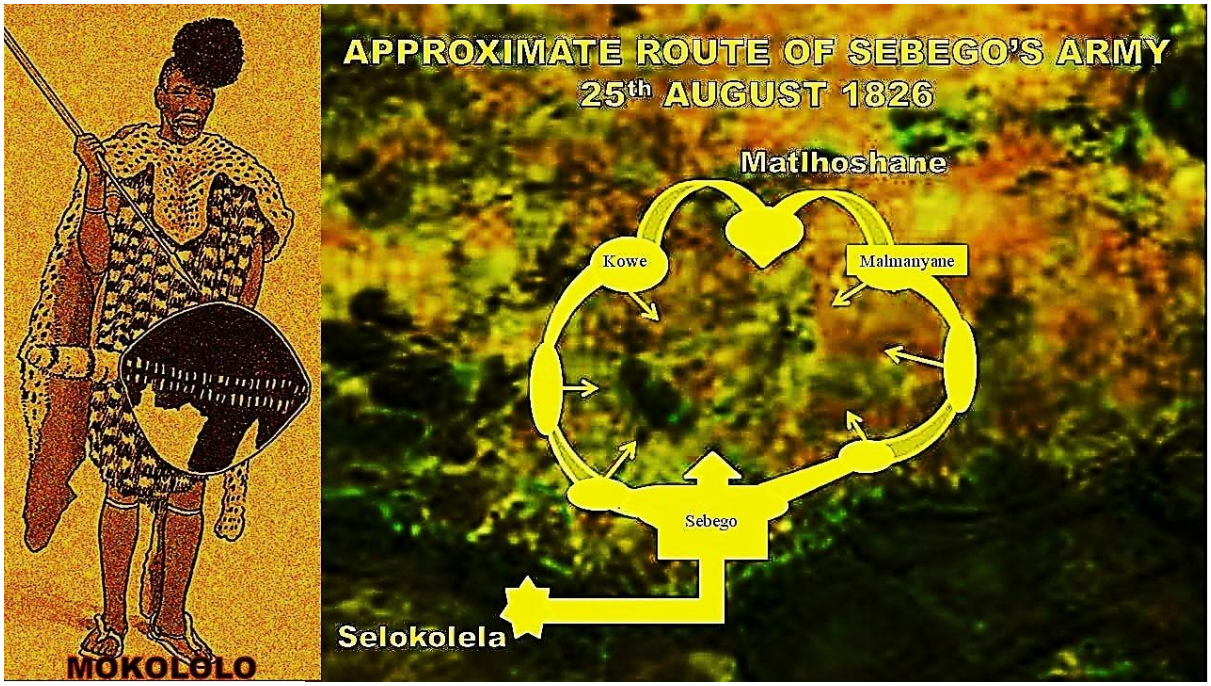

Fig. 2. Advance of Sebogo's Army on August 25, 1826

As with all aspects of the campaign, the creation of the camp was carried out in a well-planned manner. Bain was once more impressed with the discipline of the mephato:

"Our encampment was in the midst of a thick wood, which seemed in a moment as if by magic deprived of its foliage, presenting to the eye nothing but a forest of stumps. At a signal given by the King, everyone mounted the trees and with their battleaxes chopped off all the branches, which were instantly converted into circular fences for each company to pass the night in. Within this screen are arranged all their shields and assegais and, being thickly covered with long grass, only leaving a small space in the middle for a fire, they quartered as comfortably as any European army could be in tents. They slept with their feet pointing to the centre and their arms at their heads."

Besides giving shelter, the screens camouflaged the troops and their fires. The units were positioned in a circle to allow them to mobilize quickly into a defensive formation if an alarm was sounded. Thus, with a few lookouts posted around the perimeter of the camp, the Bangwaketse and accompanying Bakgatla bagaMmanaana were able to dine and sleep in secure comfort.

The advance resumed before sunrise the next day. Before setting off the warriors loaded themselves up with water, which they stored in bags made from the stomachs and intestines of the animals that had been killed during the previous day's hunt.

After about an hour, as the rays of dawn broke across the western horizon, the two horns of the army again came together in a tight "buffalo head" formation. At the centre, in a spot covered with large flat stones, Sebego consulted his magic dice with the help of his diviners.

Thereafter, the day's orders were given and the two horns spread out once more. Their new destination was Phiring in the Leropo hills, which had previously been a Bakwena mining centre.

Before noon the army was reinforced by another 1,000-man contingent who had marched from Kang. The identity of these reinforcements is uncertain.

At Phiring some seventy zebra and wildebeest were slaughtered. The screens were once more put in place and the camp settled down for a long evening feast. It was to be the warriors' last meal before battle:

"Innumerable fires rose in all directions stretching to the borders of the wood, and the sound of Chackas breaking the marrow of bone did not cease till next morning."

NOON 26th 1000+ REINFORCEMENTS ARRIVE FROM KANG
DAWN 28th ASSAULT ON DITHUBARUBA
DAWN 27th ARMY SET OFF FROM PHIRING
EVENING 25th ARMY CAMPS AT MATLHOSHANE
DAWN SELOKOLELA 25th AUGUST SEBEGO SETS OFF WITH 3000+ MEN
Sebego's March On Dithubaruba 25-28th August 1826
DAWN ASSAULT ON DITHUBARUBA 28th AUGUST 1828
Makololo retreat

Fig. 3. Sebego's advance and assault on Dithbaruba August 25-28, 1826

The Assault on Dithubaruba

Sebego's mephato had marched only a short distance on the morning of the 27th of August, 1828 before they halted. Once more the regiments assembled in a

semi-circular "buffalo head" formation. The sight of their upright spears was said to resemble "a thick valley of reeds" protruding from a sea of white shields.

As the Kgosikgolo rose, silence once more descended within the ranks of his army that with the arrival of further reinforcements was now estimated to number nearly 5000. Sebego waved a spear in the air, shouting out "Marumo!" The Bangwaketse warriors then exploded in a great outburst of whistled applause, as they waved their spears and beat them against their shields. Then, almost at once, the silence was restored.

In the face of the impending battle Sebego addressed his troops one more time; his words of motivation as recorded by Bain:

"Warriors! The honour of your country is now at stake and you are called upon to protect it. Long, long have the scum and dread of the earth had possession of our finest fields, driven us from our flourishing towns, and are still feeding on the fattest of our flocks and herds. They have killed your late king, my father, who was the love of his subjects and the dread of his enemies. Shall we longer live in continual fear of such a scourge? No! The time has now come when we must rid ourselves of them forever, that we may again restore peace to the world and claim its admiration as we are wont to do. Fortune has favoured us by sending the Makgoa to our country just as we were preparing to strike this decisive blow, but let not the brunt of the battle fall on them. Their thunder and lightning [guns] will strike terror on the enemy, but it is on your bravery alone I trust. The Makgoa are great Captains and have passed through our enemies to visit us, let them be witnesses to your courage that the fame of your glory might reach the most distant of nations. The Makgare [Makololo] are numerous as the locusts of the field, but let that not discourage you, for the Bangwaketse have hearts of lions! Yes, the Bangwaketse alone have stemmed the torrent of the Makgare, which swept from the face of the earth our once powerful neighbours the Bahurutshe and Bakwena, whose very names are now almost forgotten. Let them no more enter the territories of Moleta, where they butchered my renowned father Makaba. Yes, his glorious name must rouse our hearts to vengeance! Revenge! Revenge! Revenge!"

For the rest of the day, the mephato maintained a tight formation, while scouts spread out in all directions. There was a concern when one of these advance parties failed to capture a Mokololo woman who they feared had sighted them. Sebego's battle plan called for the enemy to be taken completely by surprise. The Bangwaketse, nonetheless, pressed on.

When his army was within a dozen kilometres of Dithubaruba another halt was ordered. Concealed in thick tree cover, most of the warriors rested till sunset,

when a short further advance was ordered bringing the Bangwaketse now within striking distance of Dithubaruba. The army then halted again, dispersing themselves into appointed positions, waiting for their final orders to push on.

Of Sebego, who had not slept the night before, Bain wrote on the eve of the battle:

"The King was, notwithstanding, always on his legs examining everything of consequence with his own eyes, and indeed we were astonished at the precautions, foresight, and military skill used by this intrepid Chief, which indicated a practical knowledge of his profession that would not have disgraced any European general."

After midnight, now in the early hours of 28th August 1826, Sebego ordered the final advance. Under cover of darkness, his 5000 men passed quietly through the open valley between the Dithubaruba and Magagarape hills. It was potentially the most dangerous phase of the operation. Had the Makololo been alerted they might have entrapped and overwhelmed the Bangwaketse.

As it was Sebetwane's men slept peacefully as Sebego's stealthily moved up the steep hillsides to surround the Makololo settlement on the plateau just before dawn. Wrote Bain:

"Every pass was quietly taken possession of before we, with the main body headed by his majesty, commenced our movement in breathless silence down the valley....we passed through a small kloof and, on reaching its summit, the faint streaks of dawn now becoming visible dimly discovered to us the devoted town of Dithubaruba at our feet...One glance at the situation showed the wisdom of the general, for the Bangwaketse white shields were now plainly perceptible in every outlet with a large body in the rear, so it was impossible for anyone to escape."

Fortified with war medicines, the mephato listened as their final orders were given. A gunshot followed by several thousand voices calling out in "a most hellish war whoop" signalled the start of the attack. While some warriors held back, securing the passes, the bulk of the army rushed forward swinging their two-handed ditshaka at everything in their way.

Sebego had strategically divided his seven gun wielding visitors on elevated ground at opposite ends of the settlement. Their muskets killed few while causing the desired panic in the ranks of the enemy. According to Bain:

"I had told our people by no means to kill any of the poor wretches except in self defence and therefore our balls passed over the town, which was now on fire in many places. The shrieks of the woman and children were most heartrending, for

wherever they turned they were met by a bloody battleaxe or the dreadful sound of our thunder. Sebego stood by us calmly looking on and giving directions to his numerous aides du camp about securing the cattle."

On all sides, there was a pandemonium of smoke, dust, and bloodcurdling screams. In his journal, Bain further acknowledged that members of his party were drawn into the murderous exhilaration, despite their supposed prior understanding to limit their engagement. In one haunting image of the melee, he painfully records that in the heat of battle a small boy "of about eight years old" ran towards them, after losing his mother; when in an instant one of the Griqua beside him stepped forward and blew his head off at point blank range.

But for the fact that some of the mephato, in line with Sebego's orders, broke off their engagement to round up the enemy's cattle, the massacre of the Makololo might have been complete. As it was many were allowed to escape with their lives, but little else.

The great wanderer Sebetwane ended up regrouping his surviving followers at Mochudi, where they remained for a few months in the summer of 1826-27, presumably for a harvest, before moving northwards against Kgosikgolo Kgari's Bangwato.

In the aftermath of his victory, Sebego moved his headquarters from Selokolela to Lwale hill north-west of Moshupa and west of Kakalashwe, which is not to be confused with the Lwale Pan that is closer to Lophephe. This coincided with the Bakgatla bagaMmanaana under Kgosi Kontle II returning to their old headquarters at Mabotsa.

By then the Bakwena Kgosi Moruakgomo, fearing both Sebego and Sebetwane, had withdrawn his followers westward across the Kgalagadi to Lehututu, before moving them northward into Ghanzi and Ngamiland. Meanwhile, a rival Bakwena faction under Segokotlo, which included the slain Motswasele II’s legitimate heir Sechele and his brother Kgosidintsi, remained among the Bangwato.

Following the battle of Dithubaruba, Sebego’s Bangwaketse and their subjects were thus for a period left virtually alone in their occupation of south-eastern Botswana, where they were able to briefly enjoy the spoils of their great victory.

To their south were the then temporarily united Barolong booRatlou, Seleka, and Tshidi merafe, with whom the Bangwaketse were now able to forge a lasting alliance. To their immediate north were Kgosi Kgari’s Bangwato, who were themselves about to be squeezed by the Makololo from their south and Banyayi

to their north. In the east, the approach to Gangwaketse was for the time being guarded by Sebego's BagaMmanaana in-laws.

Kgosikgolo Sebego's well-executed assault on Dithubaruba remains one of the bloodiest and most decisive military episodes in Botswana's recorded history. While its total body count is unknowable, in terms of its magnitude may have only been surpassed by the great 1884 defeat by the Batawana of the Amandebele at Kuthiyabasadi inside the Okavango wetlands, as well as Sebego's subsequent massacre of the Amandebele on the hot sands approaching Dultwe.

The Tautona

"Sebego opelo, ofa mapiritlwa, kebonye atlhelesetsa Matebele; oneile baba mmala wathebe." (Sebego is kind, he feeds cruel people, I saw him provision the Amandebele: he showed his foes the colour of his shield.) [13]

In the aftermath of his August 1826 expulsion of the Sebetwane's Makololo from Kweneng, Sebego ruled from Lwale, which in 1829 reportedly had a population of about 2,000.[14] There he was briefly able to enjoy undisputed dominion over south-eastern Botswana. The borders of his kingdom were further secured by his alliances with the Bakgatla-bagaMmanaana to the east and Barolong to the south and his Bangwato in-laws to the north.

Like his late father Makaba II, Sebego was now determined to further secure his position by promoting contact with the British-ruled Cape Colony for the direct export of his karosses and ivory. With no immediate military challenge, his disciplined regiments were free to exploit the abandoned hunting grounds of Kweneng, as well as Gangwaketse. Travellers' accounts from the period confirm that southern Botswana was at the time teeming with wildlife, including elephants and rhinos.

The effect of firearms at Dithubaruba must have also reinforced the Mongwaketse in his determination to acquire the *makgoa's* thunder and lightning through the game products trade. Besides meeting market demand the European and Griqua merchants understood that supplying powerful rulers like Sebego with arms would, at least in the short term, increase the market supply of ivory while securing their standing at Kgosing.

For his part, Sebego appreciated the fact that the principal ivory traders preferred to base their business operations in the vicinity of mission stations. The permanent presence of traders among the Batlhaping in the area around Rev. Robert Moffat's LMS station at Kuruman (Kudumane) was a prominent example of this phenomenon.

It is, therefore, not surprising that the Kgosikgolo wasted little time in following up on the missionary's previous promise to his father to establish an LMS presence among the Bangwaketse. An opportunity seemingly presented itself when in 1827 he was informed that Moffat was staying near his southern border among the Barolong at Tswaing (Morokweng) just south of the Molopo River. He immediately dispatched emissaries to entice the missionary to visit him at Lwale.

Moffat's primary motive for spending a season at Tswaing was to deepen his understanding of Setswana to advance what became his lifelong project of committing the language to writing. Not satisfied with his initial publication, an 1826 spelling book, and catechism, among the Barolong he worked to refine his grammar and orthography. As the village was also home to refugees from the north, it further provided him with an opportunity to familiarise himself with other Setswana dialects. These linguistic efforts resulted in his breakthrough 1829 translation of the Gospel of Luke, a significant step towards his crowning achievement, his 1857 translation of the entire Bible.

Determined to complete his work among the Barolong, Moffat informed the Bangwaketse that unfortunately, he was not able to join them on their return to Lwale, giving them instead a present to take to their king with the message that he hoped to be able to come some other time. To Moffat and his host's surprise, shortly thereafter Sebego himself arrived, accompanied by his Malau regiment. Their sudden appearance initially gave rise to panic; as Moffat later recalled:[15]

"A fortnight after, while sitting writing in my wagon, the hue-and-cry was raised that an enemy was approaching, when many fled, leaving the village with few inhabitants. I did not like the idea of leaving my wagon and other property, after their example, and sat waiting to see who the enemy was, when presently Sebegue, with two hundred warriors, fine-looking men, emerged from a thicket of acacias, and the trembling inhabitants were amazed to observe the chieftain, whom they never saw before, come and salute me in a way which proved that we were old acquaintances.

"I walked into the village with him and his men, to the no small astonishment of its owners, who drew near, out of breath with their flight, to see the king of the Bangwaketse. They were still more surprised when he told them that he had broken an established law of his people, which would not permit the king to leave his dominions, but that his martial appearance among them was on designs of peace; for his sole object was to induce me to accompany him to his capital."

Sebego remained with Moffat for the next two days in a vain attempt to convince the missionary to accede to his urgent request by accompanying him back to his own country. In the process the Kgosikgolo reportedly spoke at great length and with much apparent pleasure about the Reverend's previous visit to Makaba II, expressing his desire that Moffat should live among the Bangwaketse with the words "trust me as you trusted my father."

Moffat observed that Sebego went to some length to appear in European-style dress when meeting with him. For their part, the Barolong were reportedly relieved when the Malau crossed back over the Molopo.

Unwilling to permanently leave his station, Moffat did renew his efforts to recruit others to take his place among the Bangwaketse. This resulted in the 1830 arrival at Kuruman of three representatives of the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society (PEMS) led by the Rev. Prosper Lemue, who intended to proceed to Lwale.

But, by the time of the French protestant missionaries' arrival in the region, a new threat had emerged in the form of the Amandebele of Mzilikazi.[16] Originally the leader of a small Northern Nguni group known as the Khumalo, for a period Mzilikazi had submitted himself to the authority of Shaka's emerging Amazulu Kingdom. Mzilikazi ultimately proved to be too ambitious, capturing cattle from the Basotho which he subsequently refused to surrender to his Amazulu overlord. In 1821 Shaka sent an army to punish the Khumalo, who escaped across the Drakensburg range.

At the time Batswana in the region commonly referred to all Nguni as "Matebele." The origin of the name is disputed. According to one debatable account, the name is derived from a Mohurutshe prince named Motebele who was defeated by his brother Motebeyane in an ancient struggle over Bogosi jwaBahurutshe. Motebele had sought the support of a Nguni group, who were therefore called "Matebele". Mzilikazi's people adopted the name Amandebele.

Following his flight, Mzilikazi began to build up his power by attacking local Basotho and Batswana. It seemed that no merafe could withstand his regiments. Among the Amandebele victims were the Bakwena bagaMagopa, the mother morafe of the Bakwena bagaKgabo, Bangwato, and Batawana, as well as Bangwaketse, who until then had also been the dominant morafe in the region in and around modern Gauteng.

Although their ruler, Kgosikgolo More, had by the time of the Amandebele invasion become old and infirm, for two years the BagaMogopa put up a stout resistance. But, in 1827, they were finally defeated. To consolidate his hold over the eastern Bakwena domains Mzilikazi ordered that More, along with his sons,

be executed. Although the Bakwena bagaMagopa morafe survives in South Africa to this day, they never fully recovered their former glory. Their fate may have fortified Sebego in his subsequent resistance.

As he established his hegemony over more merafe, Mzilikazi began demanding tribute from others, in the process becoming known to Batswana in general as the "Tautona".

Having subordinated the merafe east of the Madikwe – such as the Bafokeng, Bahurutshe, Balete, Baphiring, and Bapo, as well as various Bakgatla and eastern Bakwena communities - in 1831 Mzilikazi mobilized a massive force to terrorise what was left of the free Batswana on his western border, namely the Bangwato and scattered remnants of the Bakwena, as well as the Bangwaketse.

The Amandebele swept through eastern Botswana destroying the Bakwena communities under the breakaway Kgosi Kgame then living along the Limpopo, before turning their attention towards the already battered Bangwato under Kgosi Sedimo.

Following the fall of the BagaMogopa, Sebego had sent some white cattle Mzilikazi as a sign of friendship, apparently hoping that the gesture would placate the Tautona. But, in 1831 the Bangwaketse were caught off guard when Amandebele raiders also suddenly appeared in their country, capturing cattle and burning Lwale.[17] In response, Sebego removed his headquarters further to the west, at Letlhakeng.

As a result of this incident, Lemue's party deferred their plans to establish a mission among the Bangwaketse, instead taking up residence for a period among the Bahurutshe at Mosega. In the absence of further Amandebele incursions, Sebego contemplated returning to Lwale, sending emissaries to Mosega to invite the missionaries to join him there.

But events took yet another turn later in the year when the Amandebele, under pressure from the Amazulu, moved en mass into the Lehurutshe region along the Madikwe River, with Mzilikazi now making Mosega, which was quickly abandoned by the missionaries, his headquarters. This migration was accompanied by new demands for tribute by the Tautona.

Just when the fortunes of various Batswana in the region seemed to be at their lowest, Kgosi Pilane aPheto of the Bakgatla bagaKgafela instigated a counter-offensive against the Tautona. That Pilane had a relationship with the Bangwaketse as well as the Bakwena at the time is certain, but whether Sebego was thus privy to his scheming is unclear.

After a period of exile, Pilane had assumed leadership of a faction of the BagaKgafela at Letlhakeng, before returning to the hills that now bear his name to unite the rest of his merafe under his authority. Before long his bold if not reckless ambitions began to clash with the Tautona's requirements. Pilane became an intermediary between the subjugated Batswana living north of the Vaal and the emerging coalition of Batswana refugees and Griqua south of the river

The key conspirator was, however, Makaba II's old partner, Barend Barends. In June 1831 the Griqua Kaptien had secretly scouted Mzilikazi's domains while courting allies. With so many of Mzilikazi's regiments occupied beyond the Madikwe and Limpopo, he decided that the time was ripe for a major offensive. Returning to his headquarters at Boetsap, he rallied a commando of over 400 armed Griqua who, accompanied by Barolong and Bahurutshe regiments, pushed north to link up with Pilane's Bakgatla and others.

Meeting little resistance as they advanced, the commando captured great herds of cattle, a feat that soon distracted them from their military mission. In the absence of Barends, who had gone off to link up with others, the main body of Griqua became careless, believing that the Amandebele were afraid to challenge their guns. Indeed, Mzilikazi had no intention of pitting his assegai against musket fire in daylight. Having initially been taken by surprise, he was instead content to lure his opponents into complacency, offering no resistance, while shadowing their every move.

With each passing day, the number of unobserved Amandebele stealthily approaching the Griqua grew. Finally, as the invading enemy began to break up, with most of the Griqua determined to drive their captured cattle towards the Vaal, the Amandebele prepared their attack. At this point, some of the captured Amandebele women tried to warn the Griqua not to underestimate the Tautona's capacity to strike when they least expected. They anxiously advised them to picket their encampment lest they be ambushed during the night, further warning that while many warriors were away a home guard of veterans, operating under the cover of darkness had taken the field after their arrival.

That same evening, as the Griqua slept off an excessive evening of premature victory feasting, their camp was quietly surrounded by the Amandebele, who attacked before dawn. As the Amandebele approached within two hundred metres of the sleeping Griqua, an alarm was finally sounded, but it was too late. Many were speared as they reached for their guns. In the darkness and confusion, even those who managed to get off a shot are said to have killed their comrades as well as opponents.

Only three of the over 300 Griqua escaped; eventually reaching the mission station at Makwassie, where they were able to report the fate of the others to Barends. The rest lay dead at the foot of the hill where they had camped. A few years later when Boer trekkers came upon the site, they were horrified to find the ground still littered with hundreds of bleached skeletons, calling the place "Moordkop" ("Murder Hill"), by which it is known to this day.

Having thus slaughtered the Griqua, the Amandebele made short work of the Bakgatla bagaKgafela, who were intercepted nearby at Kgetleng. Pilane escaped finding refuge among the Balanga of Kgosi Mapela in today's Limpopo Province.

Perhaps emboldened by the initial stand of the Bakgatla bagaKgafela and their Griqua allies, the Bangwaketse, along with the Barolong booRatshidi, had refused to pay tribute to the Tautona. The resulting war between the latter and the Amandebele was sparked by an incident when two of Mzilikazi's tribute collectors- Bhoya and Bhangele- casually arrived among the Barolong at Khunwana during a time of bogwera training. The leader of the new "Mantwa" mophato, the future ruler Montshiwa also known as Seja-Nkabo, being the son of Kgosi Tawana and his great wife Sebodio, decided to take matters into his own hands by having the two Amandebele executed on the spot, a deed celebrated in the following Serolong verse:

"Re kile ra ineelela dichaba, ra ineela, ka lebogo, merafe; Seja-Nkabo [Montsioa] a sale mmotlana, a sale mo thring yaga Sebodio. Jaana ke mmoonye a tlhatlosa motho lekgabana, mo pega ntswe ja Ga-Khunwana tlhogo, a nale mmaba, aya go bolaya, Seja-Nkabo-a-Tawana!"

(Too long have we have bent the knee to foreigners, too long have we yielded the arm to strangers; Montsioa, at the time was still a baby, astride the back of his mother Sebodio. Now I have seen him lead a man up a hill, leading up to the creat of Mount Khunwana; conducting the enemy up to his death, Seja-Nkabo, the son of Tawana!") [18]

Enraged at the news, Mzilikazi commanded that his warriors mobilise so that they might wash their assegai in the blood of the insolent Barolong booRatshidi and Bangwaketse. At Khunwana the Barolong put up a stout resistance but were ultimately overwhelmed. Breaking out of encirclement the survivors fled to the west and south to fight another day.

Thus, at the beginning of 1833, Sebego found himself preeminent among the handful of dikgosi still holding out against the Tautona. The tragic example of others had at least given him time to prepare his strategy, which was based on

drawing the Amandebele deep into the inhospitable expanse of the central Kgalagadi.[19]

Sebego's disposition was a mystery to the warriors who assembled at Mzilikazi's kraal at eGabeni. They assumed that he was at Letlhakeng, which was the invaders' initial target as they set out with instructions to punish the Bangwaketse with the same zeal as had been demonstrated against the Barolong, Bakgatla, and Griqua.

And so it was that a large force of Amandebele, whose ranks included younger regiments who had pleaded for the opportunity to wash their spears, advanced from eGabeni in a northwest direction. As to who was their commanders and what were the names of their regiments no known memory survives. Such details were lost with an ignominious defeat so complete as to have subsequently become unmentionable at the Tautona's court. Their coming is at least remembered by the Baloongwe and Kua (Basarwa) as well as Bangwaketse, who were in the path of their advance.

Finding Letlhakeng abandoned, the invaders encountered and gave chase to Bangwaketse units whom Sebego had ordered to act as bait, luring the enemy into his trap. The Bangwaketse along with their allies, thus played a cat-and-mouse game, appearing only to vanish, all the while drawing the Amandebele after them ever deeper into the sandveld.

With each passing day, the pursuing Amandebele grew weaker. They were unfamiliar with the local melons and tubers used by the locals to refresh themselves, as well as water points and other aspects of the environment. When water points were reached, they were invariably poisoned.

According to Sengwaketse accounts, Sebego employed Kua (Khoi/Khoe, Basarwa), spies to misguide the Tautona's men away from any sustenance. In this respect, the Setswana and Shekgalagari traditions are consistent with long-overlooked Kua folk memory.

Beyond any links to the Bangwaketse via the Baloongwe, the Kua would have undoubtedly had their own motives for frustrating the trespassing Amandebele, who are remembered as the "Kibere" of "Musiyacheche". Kuela Kiema provides an account of a great hunter named ≠Haan!abo who launched a solo attack on the Amandebele to divert them from his nearby village. Captured, ≠Haan!abo guided the invaders away from his settlement for several days before escaping. Kiema also relates an additional tradition of Amandebele warriors being lured to their death during a trance dance, while additional oral traditions collected by Masakazu Osaki refer to a Kua hero in the campaign identified as "Guru".[20]

There can be no doubt that the Kua played a role in Sebego's broader scorched earth strategy.

Eventually, the Amandebele found their way to the outskirts of Dultwe pan, where Sebego had brought his mephato together. As a final lure herd boys were sent out with beasts to entice the exhausted and famished invaders, who obligingly gave chase toward a solid phalanx of white shields. Out of the enemy's sight, Sebego's horns were already coming together.

The Bangwaketse attacked the Amandebele on all sides. Few, if any escaped. A handful of Bakgalagari families, who today claim Amandebele descent, may be a legacy.[21] Otherwise, it is said, none ever returned to eGabeni.

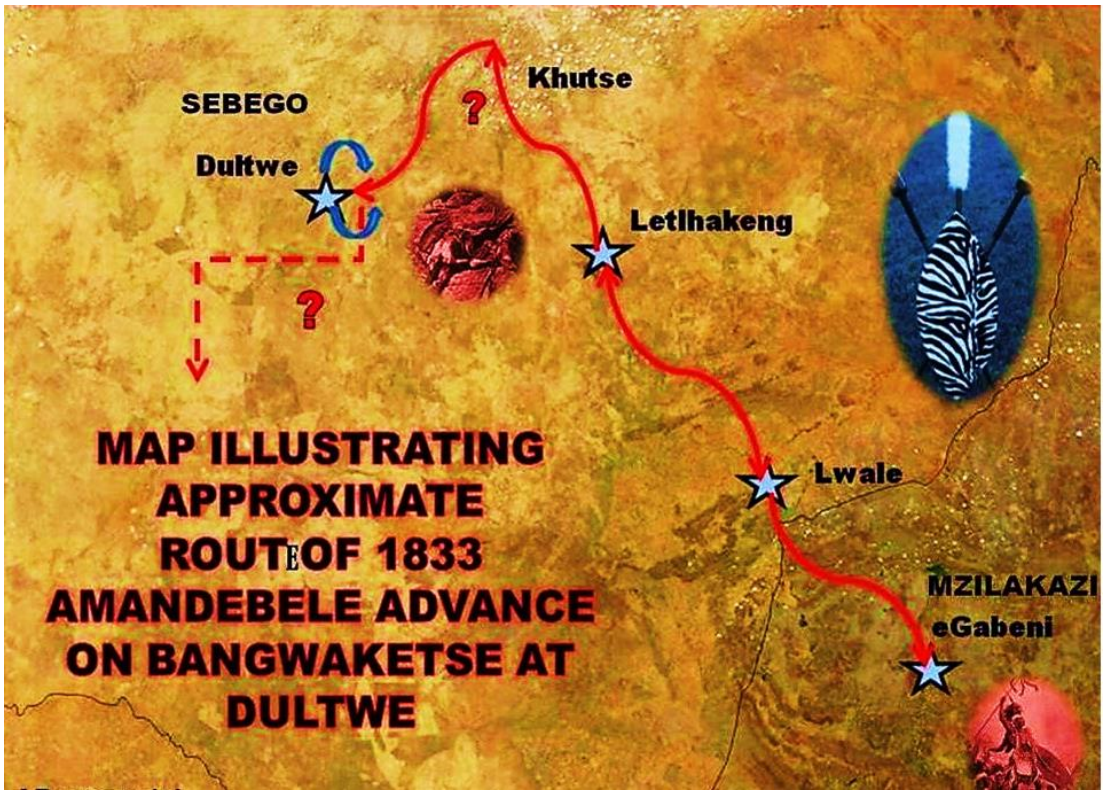

Fig 4. Map illustrating the approximate route of the 1833 Amandebele advance on Dultwe

Tale of two princes: Gaseitsiwe and Sechele

In the aftermath of the Bangwaketse victory at Dultwe, the Amandebele did not launch another major expedition into the Kgalagadi interior. Sebego was for the moment militarily secure. But, given the needs of his subjects, not the least of which is the need to maintain their livestock, prolonged residence in the central Kgalagadi was environmentally unsustainable.

As the Amandebele were still too much of a threat to contemplate any immediate return to the east, Sebego cast his eyes towards new opportunities in the lands to his west. He, therefore, prepared to move his headquarters to Monnyalatsela, near Ghanzi, while a segment of the morafe would remain behind at Dultwe under a royal uncle named Diatleng.[22]

Before the migration took place, two incidents occurred that would shape the region's history.

Among the Bangwaketse Sebego is remembered as a great schemer as well as a talented warlord. According to some accounts he long coveted the crown that was not rightfully his by birth; having been born of Makaba II's junior wife Matshadi. It is in this context that some have alleged that he was complicit in the death of his father at Losabanyana.

While we cannot be certain about the veracity of the patricide allegations, there is little dispute that while still at Dultwe, Sebego was behind the poisoning of the milk sacks that were set aside for his two nephews, Tshosa's sons Ralekoko and Gaseitsiwe. Ralekoko died but Gaseitsiwe survived after vomiting the poison.

At this point, Sebego, feigning concern, pressed Gaseitsiwe's mother Mojankunyane about returning with her surviving son to her people, the Barolong, while he sorted out matters in the west. Already fearing the consequences of staying more than the danger of the wilderness before her, MmaGaseitsiwe then decided to immediately set out on a hazardous journey through the arid sandveld, accompanied only by her elder sister, Mojanko, and Gaseitsiwe. The closest Barolong settlement was then over three hundred kilometres to the south, via terrain filled with both human and wildlife predators.

After several days on the run, the trio came upon a "Bakgalagadi" settlement at Sita, which is about halfway on a straight line between modern Jwaneng and the Molopo River. There they were welcomed by the local headman named Kgano who unbeknownst to them had already received instructions from Sebego that Gaseitsiwe is killed.

In the end, Kgano ignored the order, as he was haunted by his Mongwaketse wife, Mma Sentswelakae's, visions of severe retribution should he go ahead with the deed. She had specifically warned her husband of a premonition in which he was consumed alive by worms after murdering the prince. And so, fate once more spared Gaseitsiwe.

Departing from Sita, the trio fortuitously encountered a Mongwaketse named Tlagae, who may have been sent to rescue them, but otherwise guided the party to Mosita, which was located about a hundred kilometres further to the south, not far from Moffat's mission station at Kudumane.

On their arrival at Mosita, MmaGaseitsiwe's party found a mixed community consisting of Barolong refugees and the remnant of the Bangwaketse who had previously joined Tshosa's rebellion and had since remained in exile under Segotshane.

A year earlier the Barolong and Bangwaketse had been together at Khunwana when it was attacked by the Amandebele. But, while the majority of the Barolong had ultimately escaped to the southeast, eventually reaching Thaba Nchu, Segotshane's Bangwaketse and the accompanying Barolong had turned southwest finding refuge among the Batlhaping.

Welcoming the still-young Gaseitsiwe, Segotshane now assumed the role of his regent. As news spread of the crown prince's whereabouts, more Bangwaketse came to Mosita, some having been previously scattered on their own, while others now abandoned Sebego. As his following grew, Segotshane decided to return to Gangwaketse, establishing his headquarters in Tswaneng. The Bangwaketse thus became divided between the followers of Sebego and those of Motswaraledi-Kgosi Segotshane.

Meanwhile, back at Dultwe fortune had also favoured another young prince, Sechele. Following the execution of his father Motswasele II, the Mokwena had had an adventurous youth in exile among the Bangwato and Makololo before settling with a handful of followers under Sebego's protection at Moselebye.[23]

In 1832-33, before the defeat of the Amandebele at Dultwe, a hunting expedition led by a Scottish trader named David Hume, otherwise known as "Taute", passed through the region.[24] It was agreed that one of Sechele's men, Mosimane aMothei, would accompany the party. Taute then headed for the wells at Lophephe, where nearby, at Matsheng, lived the largest faction of the now scattered Bakwena, known as the "Bamosima", under the authority of Sechele's hostile uncle Molese aLegwale.

Upon the arrival of Taute's party outside of Matsheng, Mosimane kept to himself, but he was recognised when hiding under one of Taute's wagons by a headman named Mmupi aSekgatlhanye, who warned him to stay hidden until sunset. That evening Mmupi took Mosimane to another royal uncle, Senese aSeitlhamo, who was eager to know of Sechele's circumstances. Thereafter,

Mosimane maintained a low profile at Senese's ward, Matlhalerwa, while other notables were secretly consulted.

Without informing Molese, Senese then dispatched two of his followers, Magogwe and Segakisa aRampena, to seek and assist Sechele. The return of Mosimane with the other two to Moselebye, along with the news of Senese's covert support, convinced Sechele, by now in his early twenties, that the moment had finally arrived for him to begin to take back his father's throne.

Accompanied by Mosimane, Magogwe, and Segakisa, Sechele travelled to Dutlwe, where Sebego blessed his cause with a gift of royal cattle. These were placed in the care of Segakisa, who was subsequently designated by Sechele to serve as his "mogotsa-molelelo" or "keeper of the fire". Both the royal herd and Segakisa's ward, which survives as one of the principal sections of Molepolole, were thereafter called "Difetlhamelo" or "lighters of the fire".

While at Dultwe, the Mokwena also acquired something else from the Bangwaketse monarch. Following his departure, one of Sebego's junior wives, named Mmakgari, absconded to join Sechele. [NB: Three of Sechele's wives were known as "Mmakgari" and should not be confused. The other two – Mokgokong the mother of Sechele's son Kgari and his last wife, the widow of Bangwato Kgosi Matsheng, whose firstborn was also named Kgari.]

Finally arriving at Matsheng late in the day, Sechele decided to wait until dawn before entering the settlement. By sunrise, Senese was by his side. The same morning also coincided with the assemblage of what was to be communal dance. But the gathering was disrupted by the sight of the Sechele coming toward the village with his back to the sun. Soon a crowd gathered around to welcome their long-lost prince.

Among the first to greet Sechele was his brother Kgosidintsi, who offered him a goat and a tortoiseshell full of milk to signal his acceptance of his younger, but senior, sibling's authority. Thereafter Kgosidintsi would become Sechele's lifelong loyal deputy while presiding over his ward, Mokgalo, which also survives to this day.

Amidst the jubilation, Molese retreated to his household, where he is said to have remained cloistered for three full days. On the evening of the third day, Sechele ordered Rrakobo aSeletlo to climb a tree and call out challenges to Molese and his regiment, the "Mateane" ("Wild Dogs").

The next morning the Mateane did emerge, massing at the kgotla. But, despite much pushing and shoving on their part, which resulted in only minor injuries,

they found no room for themselves around the fire. Molese also appeared but, with few staunch followers now at his side, he quickly fled. He would remain away for some years before being welcomed back by Sechele to live and die as a respected elder.

The two princes – Gaseitsiwe and Sechele - had thus taken the first steps towards securing their birthrights. But it would be another two decades before they would in each case complete the reunification and restoration of their respective merafe. For the time being the pair sat somewhat uncomfortably in the twin shadows of the "Hard Hearted Crocodile", Sebego, living to their west, and the "Great Lion" Mzilikazi, on their east.

Sebego at Ghanzi

In 1834 Sebego shifted the main body of his followers to Monnyelatsela Pan, near Ghanzi.

Sebego was not moving into unfamiliar territory. The sons of Masilo aMalope, including the descendants of Ngwaketse, had known the place for generations. This was the case notwithstanding the colonial era myth that before the late 19th-century arrival of a few Boers, Ghanzi was an empty land - "*nullius terra*" in their legal Latin – on the basis that it had supposedly only occupied by "roving Bushmen", i.e., Kua or Khoe (Basarwa). [25]

Mmamosadinyana's agents then and thereafter further assumed that, as Bushmen, the Khoe were by their nature a landless people. It was based on this assumption transformed into convenient legal fiction that, in 1898, the Ghanzi District was handed over as "Crownland" to Cecil Rhodes British South Africa Company by the then British Tautona, Lord Milner.

The local Khoe, most notably the Naro-khoe (//Aikwe) and historically intertwined Auen (Au/ai), but also Dcui-khoe (IGui), Dxana-khoe (IIGana) and others, have of course never understood much less accepted themselves as being landless.

By 1800 the Naro and Auen in the region were organised under three traditional leaders or Xhaihasi (a title that itself can be roughly translated as "Land Lords"), located around modern Rietfontien, Ghanzi, and Kobis Pan. Thereafter, in the mid-19th century, the communities were for a period united under an Auen paramount named Dukiri.

There were also Tjiherero speakers in the area, i.e., Ovaherero in this case more precisely Ovambandero whom Batswana commonly referred to as "Matlamma".

By the early 18th century, they had established cattle posts throughout much of the area that now constitutes the Ghanzi Farms under the protection of a ruler named Mutjise. There is, so far at least, little evidence of the Ovambandero and Khoe having come into conflict at the time.

The Ovambandero presence was, however, ultimately challenged by Setswana/Shekgalagari speakers who were also already in the area. By the early 18th century many of the peoples in of western Kgalagadi, including Ghanzi, who claimed common descent from Matsieng of Lowe, were further united by their identification with a Morolong ruler named Mongologa, whose followers came to be collectively known as the Bangologa.

Here again, while the Ovambandero and Bangologa became rivals, the admittedly limited available evidence suggests that before the 19th century, there was little conflict between the Bangologa and Khoe in Ghanzi, unlike elsewhere. In this respect, the relative status of the Naro at the time is perhaps reflected in the fact that they were referred to ka Sengologa as “Bakgotjhu” (“Makgothu”) rather than “Basarwa.”

Throughout the 18th and early 19th centuries the Ghanzi region may have been better watered than in more recent times. It was certainly attractive for its abundance of game, as well as good grazing. Written accounts by the earliest European visitors further testify to the widespread existence of wells among all of the region's communities, which were already drawing on the area's underground aquifers.

In addition, Ghanzi at the time was a major nexus of trade, from whence copper from Otavi and iron from the Kwebe Hills as well as cattle and game products were carried south to the Cape Colony via the Barolong and Batlhaping. In the decades before Sebego's migration, Barolong predominance in the wider western Kgalagadi trade had been contested by the Bangwaketse and Bakwena, as well as the Ovambandero.

For Ovambandero and Barolong-Bangologa what had started as tit-for-tat cattle raids escalated c. 1750 into open warfare. As recorded a century and a half later by an interested Protectorate Police NCO named Moses Malata:

"Both Herero and Bandero [Ovambandero] were fighting with the Barolong and they were strong on both sides. The war lasted some months because the Damara [in this context Tjiherero speakers] used to get fresh regiments from SWA [Namibia] & the Barolong were getting mephato from the south. However, later the Barolong pushed the Herero and Bandero out."[26]

The Ovambandero did withdraw into Namibia, but c. 1780 they returned in larger numbers under the leadership of Mitjise's son Tjrua, in turn temporarily pushing out the Barolong.

During the 1820s and 1830s the Ovambandero, by now led by Tjrua's son Tjamuaha, proved resilient in also turning back successive challenges by the Makololo, Moruakgomo's Bakwena, and Motswakhumo's Batawana factions, as well a party of Amandebele, who appear to have been separated from the victims of Dultwe, as well as the Bangologa. But their good fortune ended with the arrival of Sebego's Bangwaketse.

From his base at Monnyelatsela, Sebego moved to forcibly to impose his hegemony. Having chased away Moruakgomo's Bakwena, he sent out his mephato to collect tribute in the form of cattle and game products from both the Ovambandero and Bangologa.[27] The Ovambandero rallied against the Bangwaketse. But their resulting defeat was so decisive as to cause Tjamuaha to once more abandon the region. They only returned decades later, during the reign of his grandson, as refugees fleeing the genocidal German occupation of Namibia.

The Bangwaketse victory is said to have been amply rewarded in captured livestock; as reflected in the following passage from Sebego's praise poem:

"Ketswa lemotlasedi Tlammeng [Matlamma=Tjiherero speakers]*, ketswa gobona kaditlhaba dilwela, banna bajana kaseputlela salerumo. Dikgomo tsabokone magolonkwane; digolo maoto, dinaka gadigole, magolonkwane ooRrakgaodi....Thamaga dididibolbola; dikgomo diditsubaba Rramaomana, Rramaomana aMokube...Keile lemotlhasedi Tlammeng, ngwana wa namane tseditlhaba, mmusi, tseditlhaba tsamotse wa Matlamma; rediraetse molamu watshukudu, rere tlhaba dikhubame kamangole, dilebe goene, moabi aKhuto."*[28]

(I come with the attacker from Hereroland; I watched a fight for dark-brown cattle, men killing each other with spear thrusts. The cattle in the east have short horns, the short-horned cattle of Kgaodi…I went to Hereroland with the attacker, the ruler, the child of dark-brown calves, the dark-brown ones of the Herero village; we charmed a rhinoceros-horn club for them, that the brown cattle might fall on their knees and face him, the distributor, the son of Khuto."

Another apparent legacy of Sebego's short residence in Ghanzi was the introduction of ivory trading and large-scale commercial hunting into the region. There can at least be no doubt that his mephato's communal hunting practices, e.g., encircling game over a wide area, were of an altogether different scale and nature to the traditional, environmentally sustainable, practices of the local Khoe.

The arrival of the Bangwaketse was also a burden for the Bangologa merchants in the region who, accompanied by a few Ovambandero breakaways, withdrew to the Matsheng area, not to be confused with the Kweneng settlement i.e. the area in Kgalagadi District where the settlements of Hukuntsi, Lehututu, Lolgwabe, and Tshane are located, not to be confused with the Kweneng settlement.

But there they found little respite. With malaria beginning to take a toll at Monnyelatsela and more pillage beckoning, in the summer of 1835-36, Sebego advanced on Matsheng setting up his new headquarters at Lehututu. From there he demanded the subservience of the Bakgwatheng and Bariti as well as Bangologa in the region, raiding the villages of any who dared to resist, seizing their livestock, including small stock, in the process.

At Hukuntsi some Bangologa sought assistance from their southern compatriots, resulting in a temporary coalition led by a Morolong named Molebe. But, Sebego defeated Molebe's force when they attacked his position at Lehututu. He then pursued survivors, catching up to them at Kurutlwe.[29] There, in the manner of the Amandebele against the Griqua at Moordkop, the Bangwaketse attacked at night, slaughtering their opponents in large numbers.

Sebego's retribution against any who thereafter resisted him is alleged to have been cruel. The French missionary Prosper Lemue reported one incident: "Having confiscated their goats Sebego had men women and children put into their huts, which were then burned down."[30]

Through such alleged heavy-handed means, Sebego is said to have terrorised much of what is now western Botswana, more especially in today's northern Kgalagadi District, into temporary submission. While the extent of Sebego's cruelty may have been exaggerated in some quarters, his time at Matsheng undoubtedly represents a historical nadir of Batswana exploitation and oppression of "Bakgalagadi".

Although the hard-hearted crocodile was able to live in relative peace for several years the seeds of his tragic downfall had already begun to sprout. By the late 1830s, Sebego's harsh methods of accumulating power had alienated some among his own Bangwaketse, as well as those he had reduced to vassal status, botlhanka.

Unable to openly challenge Sebego, many Bangologa sought relief by relocating to remote areas. Among the Bangwaketse there was a collective yearning to return to their agricultural lands, *masimo,* in the east, once peace was restored. In this respect, Kgosikgolo himself is also said to have been eager to once more harvest.

To the southeast at Tswaneng, the following of Sebego's sibling rival Segotshane, now regent for Gaseitsiwe, continued to increase as Bangwaketse voted with their feet. Among those who joined him was Bome, another of the late Makaba's sons who had deserted Sebego. At Dultwe Diatleng also aligned himself with Segotshane's faction.

In addition to a growing number of Bangwaketse, Segotshane was able to count on his alliance with Barolong and Batlhaping, who bitterly resented Sebego's forcible usurpation of their sphere of influence in the Kgalagadi. As has been noted, the Barolong were also the maternal uncles of Gaseitsiwe.

Standing between the two Bangwaketse factions was the young Bakwena Kgosi Sechele who, from his base at Lophephe was occupied trying to reunite his morafe and restore his father's authority of Kweneng, while warding off the Amandebele.

Through their commercial dealings with the Griqua and traders like David "Taute" Hume, both Segostshane and Sechele had also begun to acquire guns, which increased their capacity to protect those who sought refuge with them. In this respect, they had a common interest in securing their positions by denying firearms to Sebego and Mzilikazi.

Further to the west, in today's Namibia, the Nama had combined with the Orlams in also acquiring muskets, posing another potential threat to Sebego's Bangwaketse as well as the Ovaherero.

Notwithstanding the growing threats to his position, Sebego's reputation was growing further afield. In the pages of the Grahamstown Journal (Eastern Cape) newspaper, he was glowingly described as:

"Being the most intrepid and intelligent chief of South Africa--possessing great energy of character, and so well affected by the white man, that it is thought he would readily cooperate in any measure having for its objective the maintenance of peace, and the advancement of the natives of the extensive region he inhabits in the scale of civilisation."[31]

Voortrekkers

In 1836-37 the regional balance of power was further altered with the Boer invasion of the South African Highveld, otherwise known in Afrikaans-based accounts as the "Die Groot Trek" of the "Voortrekkers".

On the walls of the Voortrekker Monument at Gauteng are portrayed many of the Trek's supposed heroes. Only one black is included among them: Kgosi Moroka of the Barolong booSeleka.

The Morolong's appearance in Afrikanerdom's hallowed hall is a tribute to what the early Setswana historian Sol Plaatje characterised as "the tragic friendship of Moroka and the Boers." This relationship began with the 1836 Batswana-Boer alliance against the Amandebele.

While a handful of communities on his western and southern borders continued to holdout under the leadership of dikgosi like Sebego, Segotshane, Sechele, and Moroka, by 1835 the Amandebele hegemony over the Batswana heartland appeared secure. Each year more Batswana boys were being inducted into the Mzilikazi's regiments, as young women were taken as wives and concubines.

Recognizing that disunity was their greatest weakness, most of the unconquered southern dikgosi had already put aside their differences to form a pan-Batswana alliance, which also included the Griqua. Dikgosi Pilane, Segotshane, and Sechele were at least in contact with the southern front, with Sebego remaining in relative isolation at Lehututu.

Closer contact between the Batswana and Boers can be dated from 1834 when the pioneer trekkers began to pass by Moroka's stronghold at Thaba Nchu, en route to hunt for ivory. The Boers initially ignored warnings by the Batswana and Griqua about the danger of trespassing into the Tautona's domain.

In September 1836 two hunting parties of Boers were nearly wiped out by the Amandebele, while a month later a third, much larger, group under Hendrick Potgieter barely managed to survive an attack by one of the Tautona's generals, Kaliphi, on their laager at Vegkop. The survivors were left stranded with little ammunition or food, having lost all of their livestock. Hearing of their predicament Moroka decided to rescue the Boers, who were escorted back to Thaba Nchu.

In December 1836 the fateful alliance was formed. Initially, Dikgosi Gontse, Matlaba, and Tawana joined Moroka, the Griqua Kaptien Petrus Davids, and the Boer Commandants Potgieter and Gert Maritz in planning an attack on the principal Amandebele settlements at and around Mosega. The joint Batswana-Boer-Griqua force, many armed with guns, struck at dawn on the 17th of January 1837. The Rev. Daniel Lindly, an American Baptist missionary, reported:

"Sometime before sunrise, we were aroused by a starting cry, a commando! A commando! In half a minute after this alarming cry, a brisk fire commenced on a

kraal of people a few hundred yards from our house. The fire of one followed that of another in quick succession, and at the thrilling report of every gun the thought would rush on our minds, there falls one, and another, and another of the poor heathen of whose salvation we had once had some hope. In a few minutes, we were in the midst of the slaughter...The Boers attacked and destroyed thirteen, some say fifteen, kraals. Few of the men belonging to them escaped, and many of the women were either shot down or killed with assegais."[32]

Mzilikazi, along with most of his warriors, had been further north when the attack occurred. The massacre at Mosega was, nonetheless, a heavy blow. Some 1,000 Amandebele had fallen. The attackers suffered only two casualties, both Batswana. One of these had been a victim of “friendly fire” by a Boer, who mistook him for the enemy.

The Amandebele position in the greater Madikwe region now became desperate. On all sides, a "perfect storm" was gathering around the Tautona. To the north Batswana refugees, including Kgosi Pilane’s BagaKgafela, coalesced around the Balaka ruler, Mapela.

Meanwhile, in June of 1837, Nkosi Dingaane’s Amazulu launched a massive invasion across the Drakensberg, defeating a large Amandebele force along the Elands River in August 1837. In the aftermath of this engagement, Amazulu raiders swept as far as the Madikwe, destroying communities while making off with large herds of livestock before returning to their homeland.

In the southwest the Bafokeng also went on the offensive, having earlier killed Mzilikazi's tribute collectors. Meanwhile, Segotshane and Sechele raided the Tautona's cattle posts in the west.

Back at Thaba Nchu, Moroka and Boer commandants planned a second big attack. In November of 1837, some 330 Boers under Potgieter and Pieter Uys, accompanied by a greater number of Barolong led by ditona Mmui, Mongala, Seatlholo, and Motuba, burned Mzilikazi's capital eGabeni before attacking the other Amandebele military settlements along the Madikwe and Tholwane rivers.

The Tautona had again eluded the attackers. As eGabeni burned he, along with much of his army, was mobilized against the northern threat posed by Mapela and Pilane. Other Amandebele had already been sent under the command of Kaliphi, to scout out the possibility of migrating into the lands of the already embattled Bakalanga-Banyayi Mambo or King Chilisamhulu II Nichasike.[33]

Upon hearing of the new Barolong-Boer offensive, Mzilikazi decided to retreat with the rest of his people and link up with Kaliphi. Thus, on the 12th of November

1837, the Boers and Barolong, now joined by other Batswana, rested atop the Dwarsburg hills, while watching tens of thousands of Matebele cross into modern Botswana at Sikwane.

The Batswana of what is now South Africa were thus liberated from the Amandebele yoke, though for the Batswana of Botswana, the struggle had simply entered a new phase.

In the white settler historiography of this region, the indigenous African contribution to the expulsion of the Amandebele has been largely ignored. Back in 1950 Dr. S.M. Molema thus observed: "The historians, Theal, and many others before and after him, have wasted much ink and time in trying to belittle the African contribution."[34]

Still earlier, in 1930, Sol Plaatje, having interviewed a patriarch about how "Barolong blood was spilled by the gallon" in the early wars alongside the Boers wrote: "The ingratitude of the sons of their White allies made him feel bitter beyond expression. He could find no words to describe it, beyond the karossmaker's maxim: "*Ga ba na phokojane wa morokagangwa nabo*."[35]

The fall of Sebego

While the November 1837 retreat of Amandebele across the Madikwe River at Sikwane removed what had hereto been the greatest threat to the survival of not only the Bangwaketse but perhaps Sotho-Tswana civilisation in general, in the wake of the ordeal the morafe were left divided and relatively impoverished.

In the case of the Bangwaketse, a decade and a half of virtually no harvests, declining livestock numbers, and disrupted trade, as well as battlefield losses, had drained the wealth of Makaba II's once prosperous kingdom. Politically, the Bangwaketse remained divided between the followers of Sebego, still at Lehututu, and those loyal to Segotshane, who was supported by among others Diatleng's Dultwe outpost.

Besides his status as the regent for the rightful heir, Gaseitsiwe, in the wake of the Mzilikazi's evacuation Segotshane had the strategic advantage of being able to disperse his followers into the eastern Gangwaketse hardveld with the acquiescence of neighbouring merafe, the Barolong, Batlhaping and then also divided Bakwena.

Faced with a growing desire on the part of his subjects to return to their *masimo*, in 1839 Sebego approached Segotshane and the other dikgosi asking for peace

as a prelude to his return. But the others were suspicious and rebuffed his overture.

Sebego then sought to involve the LMS missionaries as mediators and likely sympathisers by speaking of Moffat and Makaba's shared vision of southwestern Batswana coming together as a peaceful confederacy.

Of his desire to engage the missionaries, it was also noted that: "Sebego, like many of the other people in the country, had the notion that if he got a single White man to live with him, he might be secure". Undeniably where Makgoa resided the flow of guns followed.

When Robert Moffat proved reluctant to become involved, Sebego reached out to his new son-in-law, the recently arrived Rev. Dr. David Livingstone. The latter had brought with him his own militant belief in the Holy Spirit made manifest in the fighting spirit of those struggling against oppression, more especially the sin of slavery.

Livingstone's passionate views on righteous resistance are reflected in his early writings, including several polemics he published in the British Banner, a radical Christian periodical, under the pseudonym "a surgeon." In one article he went so far as to interpret Napoleon's downfall as divine symmetry for his treacherous capture of the leader of the Haitian slave rebellion, observing that:

"Toussaint Louverture was sent to France to drag out his days in a dungeon, and the man who sent him thither was sent to rusticate on the rock of St. Helena."[36]

Sebego's initial outreach to Livingstone is recorded in a July 1842 letter by the missionary. Livingstone had taken up temporary residence at Dithejwane (near modern Molepolole) among the Bakwena faction then under Bubi, who had succeeded his half-brother Moruakgomo:

"On returning to the country of Bubi, I found 16 people of Sebegwe [Sebego] waiting for my arrival. He is the Chief of one-half of the Wanketze [Bangwaketse]tribe and lives nearly ten days directly west of Bubi. He was driven to his present position in the sandy desert by Mosilikatse, and there he had the address to cut off many detachments of the forces of that marauder, while all other tribes fled before them. By superior generalship, he managed to keep possession of his cattle. The others having lost theirs are envious, and have leagued together lately to purchase numbers of horses and guns in order to deprive Sebegwe of what he alone had the courage to defend. In order that he might be more easy prey for them; they have been trying for some time to

induce him to come out of his present situation, to the country near Bubi, where he could sow corn, etc. Sebegwe could not trust the tribes in this direction, for he knew that the individuals who had prepared to attack him belonged to all the southern tribes. Even his brother Sehutsane [Segotshane], chief of the other half of the Wanketze, murdered the ambassadors that Sebegwe had sent to conciliate him. The plundering expedition was to have left this quarter during the time I was in the Bakwain [Bakwena] country I, therefore, felt anxious to warn him of the danger..."[37]

For his part the young then somewhat impetuous, Livingstone, who had arrived among the Batswana during the previous year, openly expressed his admiration for the courage and generalship of Sebego. Livingstone was then of the firm conviction that the reservations if not the hostility of other dikgosi towards Sebego were primarily the product of petty jealousy. In this respect, he went so far as to try to warn Sebego of the conspiracies being hatched against him.

Sebego received Livingstone's warning but was nonetheless already determined to push forward, re-establishing his headquarters at Moshaneng.

Diatleng alerted Segotshane, who in turn recruited additional armed support from Kgosi Mahura's Batlhaping. With many of his men, along with the Batlhaping, having guns, Segotshane together with Mahura attacked and defeated Sebego at Male. It was Sebego's first in a series of military setbacks during the second half of 1842. He later confided to Livingstone that he had grossly underestimated the extent of his opponent's firepower.

With his surviving following, Sebego found refuge with Bubi. But, soon thereafter he suffered further losses when Bubi was in turn attacked by Sechele in a bloody, but unsuccessful attempt on the latter's part to forcibly reunite the Bakwena. While Sechele had failed in his political objective, his men enjoyed greater success relieving Sebego as well as Bubi of their cattle.

An Amandebele raid, which caught most of the merafe in the region off guard, continued the streak of misfortune. But some relief came when Sebego, escorted by a party of Griqua, visited Sechele who agreed to restore cattle to his former patron.

Sebego was then able to settle with a by now reduced following at Tlhasokwane where could count on the friendship of his nephew, the recently installed Bakgatla baga Mmanaana Kgosi Mosielele, who was based nearby at Maanwane. Mosielele had grown up under Sebego before the c. 1840 death of his brother Kgosi Pheko when he was called to assume the throne.

In February 1843 Sebego was finally visited by Livingstone.[38] According to the latter's account after some initial tension caused by Sebego's suspicion about the role of the Kudumane mission in the arming of his opponents, the two were able to confirm their friendship. Notwithstanding the previous year's humbling reverses, Livingstone remained convinced that Sebego could play an important role in the rebirth of local society. It probably did not hurt that Sebego went out of his way to cater to his visitor, as the missionary acknowledged:

"He, however, during the whole of our visit behaved in a most friendly way. It being Saturday when I arrived, I explained the nature of the Sabbath and requested an opportunity to address his people. The next morning before daybreak I was much pleased to hear a herald proclaiming that, by order of the chief, 'nothing should be done on that day but the praying to god and listening to the words of the foreigner'.

"He [Sebego] himself listened with great attention when I told him of 'Jesus and the resurrection', and I was not infrequently interrupted by him putting sensible questions on the subject. He told me he once saw Mr. Moffat, but as Mr. M. was then young and did not know the language it was not remarkable that Sebego had forgotten all he had said."

In another conversation, the two debated the meaning of the appearance of a large comet then in the Southern Hemisphere skies. Ka Setswana comets are traditionally seen as portents of calamity and the passing of great rulers. The deaths of Kgosi Batheon I and Mmamosadinyana's son King Edward VII along with the formation of the racist Union of South Africa were thus locally associated with the 1910 passage of Halley's Comet.

Observing that he had seen a comet on the eve of the Amandebele invasion, Sebego wondered whether the sky now singled their return. He was also privately eager to know whether the baloi he had directed against his nemesis, Mahura, had come to fruition. Livingston scoffed at anything that detracted from the will of God.

After two weeks Livingstone departed, determined to return the next year to establish a mission at Mabotsa that would bring light to Sebego's Bangwaketse along with the area's Bakgatla bagaMmanaana and Balete.

But, before the missionary's return, Sebego was dead; killed in November 1844 by an apparent hunting accident near Kudumane, while en route to Griquatown to visit its leader Klaas Waterboer.[39]

Some allege that the accident was an assassination. Others that Sebego was on a journey to acquire the firearms he needed to once more make himself the most dreaded of all dikgosi. We can never know for sure.

Postscript – Reunification

"Batho barile basena goswa botlhe, basena gonyelela batho, mosopeng gatlhogo letlhogela, Retlhotse releganela le Motsokwane; Motsokwane orile, jamfodiri, nna rraagwe keganela, kare jamokgoba, more omontle molobare." ("After the people had all died, after the people had disappeared, a shoot sprouted forth in ruin. We argued about it with Motsokwane; Motsokwane said it is a bush willow; I, his father, argued it was a wild plum, a beautiful plum blossom tree.")[40]

In the wake of Sebego's passing, the Bangwaketse remained in two, albeit progressively less hostile, camps. Sebego was succeeded at Tlhasokwane by his son Senthufe, who subsequently moved first to Kwakgwe and Kanye proper. Among those who went with him was a local evangelist named Sebubi, who is credited as the man who truly introduced the gospel to the Bangwaketse.

Meanwhile, having for a time lived among the Batlhaping at Taungs, the Bangwaketse under Segotshane moved to Diphawana, just south of Kanye, where Gaseitsiwe was finally crowned.[41] Both factions of the Bangwaketse fought alongside the Bakwena and other merafe against the Transvaal Boers during the Batswana-Boer War 1852-53. While the Bangwaktetse fled from the Dimawe battlefield on August 30, 1852, under Senthufe's leadership they regrouped to successfully repel the Boer invaders at Kwakgwe two days later and participated in subsequent Batswana raids against Boer farms in the western Transvaal.

After the war, the two Bangwaketse groups were once more living together at Kanye, but under two crowns. Unwilling to accept Gaseitsiwe as his senior, in c. 1854 Senthufe moved with his followers to Male. There, in December of 1857, he was attacked by Gaseitsiwe's supporters, causing him to flee to the Bakwena. But, with the mediation of Kgosi Sechele, Senthufe finally returned and submitted to Gaseitsiwe's authority in 1859. A direct line of Gaseitsiwe's descendants have since reigned over the Bangwaketse without serious dispute.

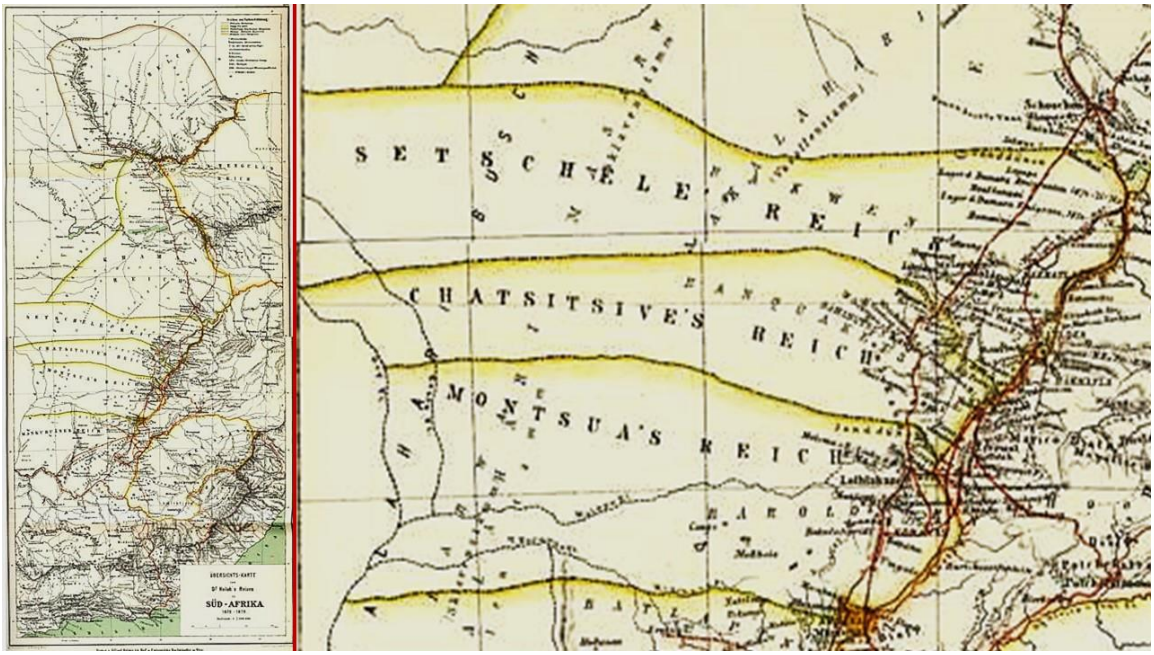

Fig. 5. 1879 Austrian Map by Dr. Emil Holub showing Gaseitsiwe's ["Chatsitsive's"] Reich or Kingdom

End Notes

[1] This manuscript was originally drafted as a case study of Botswana's military history for lectures at the Botswana Defence Force Staff College @ https://www.slideshare.net/JeffRamsay2/power-point-botswana-military-history-consolidated. It was published in 2011 in the *Sunday Standard* newspaper as part of an extended series on Bangwaketse Dikgosi and revised for the *Weekend Post* newspaper in 2014. A concise general account of Bangwaketse royalty by this author can be found in *A Royal Affair - Peo ya ga/The Enthronement of Kgosi Malope II* @ https://www.academia.edu/91920515/A_ROYAL_AFFAIR_PEO_YA_GA_KGOSI_MALOPE_II_October_7_2011_SOUVENIR_BOOK_PROGRAMME.

[2] From the praise poem of Sebego. The following excerpts of Bangwaketse praise poems, in Setswana with English translations, are drawn from Isaac Schapera *Praise Poems of Tswana Chiefs* (Oxford University Press, 1965), 148-51. They were in each case recorded at the Kanye kgotla in 1938 by Kgosikobo Chelenyane. Khuto was an early Bangwaketse ruler. The Bangwaketse are an offshoot of the Bakwena, and also have the crocodile or kwena as their totem.

[3] From Praise Poem of Makaba II in Schapera *Praise Poems of Tswana Chiefs*, 147-48.

[4] Important sources for early indigenous accounts of the Bangwaketse history can be found in the Willoughby Papers, Shelly Oak College, in particular, file 740 "Bangwaketsi" and Botswana National Archives (BNA) PP 1/1/10 Schapera papers. The latter was a primary source for I. Schapera's "A Short History of the Bangwaketse" *African Studies* vol. 1, 1 1942. Early 19th century Botswana history is further covered in J. Ramsay, B. Morton, and T. Mgadla *Building a Nation – A History of Botswana from 1800-1910* (Gaborone, Longman Botswana 1996), manuscript @ https://www.academia.edu/88220223/The_manuscript_for_Building_a_Nation_A_History_of_Botswana_from_1800_to_1910_by_Jeff_Ramsay_Barry_Morton_and_Themba_Mgadla

[5] A praise poem of Makaba II in Schapera *Praise Poems of Tswana Chiefs*, 247-48. Moleta was Makaba II's father. Like both his son and grandson he was also renowned as a military leader.
[6] Jan Bloem here refers to a German fugitive originally known as Johannes Blum who fled the Cape for the interior highveld after murdering his wife and subsequently joined the Korana. His son Jan Bloem was also a prominent Korana leader being further associated with the name Bloemfontein. See N. Parsons "Makgowa, Mahaletsela, and Maburu: traders and travellers before c.1820" *PULA Journal of African Studies*, vol. 11, no. 1 (1997), online @ https://pdfproc.lib.msu.edu/?file=/DMC/African+Journals/pdfs/PULA/pula011001/pula011001007.pdf
[7] R. Moffat *Missionary Labours and Scenes in Southern Africa* (London, John Snow 1842) 378-414. Available online, e.g., @ https://books.google.co.bw/books?id=ty4UAAAAIAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false
[8] B. Shaw "Extract of a Letter by Mr. B. Shaw, dated July 13, 1823, and S. Kay "Booshuana Country" in *Missionary Notices*, vol. 4, 95 (1823), 167.
[9] Praise Poem of Sebego in Schapera *Praise Poems of Tswana Chiefs*, 148-51. Reference to whirligig or water beetle is meant to convey Sebego's ability to elude the Amandebele through his fast and unexpected maneuvers.
[10] M. Lister (edit.) *The Journals of Andrew Geddes Bain, trader, explorer, soldier, road engineer, and geologist* (Cape Town, Van Riebeeck Society 1949), 3-78 "The Journey to the North."
[11] This author is grateful to the late Isaac Schapera for allowing me to photocopy his extensive collection of Bangwaketse, Bakwena and Bakgatla bagaMmanaaana genealogies in September of 1984. These and other materials were subsequently deposited as part of the Schapera private papers collection at the Botswana National Archives.
[12] Gordon-Cumming *A Hunter's Life in South Africa* (London, John Murray 1850), 135.
[13] Praise Poem of Sebego, I. Schapera Praise Poems of Tswana Chiefs, 149-51.
[14] According to a visiting interior trader Scoon in J.C. Chase "Substance of the Journal of Two Trading Travellers and the Communications of a Missionary, regarding their recent visits to the Countries in the rear of the Portuguese Settlement at De la Goa Bay." *South African Quarterly Journal*, vol 1, 4 (1830) 402-407 online @ https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/54198#page/16/mode/1up
[15] R. Moffat *Missionary Labours and Scenes in Southern Africa*, 469-70.
[16] For an overview of Mzilikazi's Amandebele during the period see W.F. Lye's "The Ndebele Kingdom South of the Limpopo River" *The Journal of African History* vol. 10, No. 1 (1969), 87-104 online @ https://www.jstor.org/stable/180297?read-now=1&seq=8#metadata_info_tab_contents
[17] J. Archbell "Extracts of Journal of Mr. Archbell, dated Plaat Berg. August 28, 1831, *Missionary Notices*, vol. 7, 196 (1832) 52-53. J. Baillie "Extracts of Letter of Mr. Ballie, dated New Lattakoo, August 25, 1831" in *Scottish Missionary & Philanthropic Register,* vol. 14 (1833), 37-40.
[18] Sol Plaatje "Montsioa" in Mweli Skota, *The African Yearly Register – Being an illustrated National Biographical Dictionary (Who's Who) of Black Folks in Africa* (Johannesburg, The Orange Press, 1933), 53-57. Also S.M. Molema *Montshiwa 1815-1896 Barolong Chief and Patriot* (Cape Town C. Struik 1966), 11-23.
[19] *Grahamstown Journal* May 16, 1833--"The Native Tribes Beyond the Colony to the North" by a "correspondent". Also, further correspondence in the June 13, 1833 edition.
[20] Kuela Kiema *Tears for my Land, A Social History of the Kua the Central Kalahari Game Reserve, Tc'amnqoo,* (Gaborone, Mmegi Publishing House, 2010), 25-28. M. Osaki

"Reconstructing the Recent History of the G/ui and G//ana Bushmen. Kyoto University African study monographs. Supplementary issue 2001, 26: 29-30 online @ https://jambo.africa.kyoto-u.ac.jp/kiroku/asm_suppl/abstracts/pdf/ASM_s26/04_Osaki.PDF

[21] Scattered references to Amandebele in the Kgalagadi can be found in I. Schapera and D.F. van der Merwe *Notes on the Tribal Groupings, History, and Customs of the Bakgalagadi*, University of Cape Town Communications from the School of African Studies New Series no. 13, September 1945.

[22] Diatleng was a half-brother to Makaba II being the son of a junior wife of Kgosi Moleta.

[23] BNA 1/1/10 Schapera Papers: Kwena Notes History and Willoughby Papers, File 739 Bakwena.

[24] Accounts of David Hume's 1832-33 expeditions into Botswana: H.M. McKay "David Hume" in *Africana Notes and News,* vol. 2, 1 (1944), 53-54 and P.R. Kirby "The aftermath of the Andrew Smith Expedition" *Africana Notes and News*, vol. 5, 1 (1947, 3-19. Also "Expedition merchantile dans L'interior du sud de l'Afrique" in *Journal des Missions Evangeliques*, vol. 9 1834, 222-23

[25] Additional sources: E. Wilmsen *Land Filled with Flies – A Political Economy of the Kalahari* (University of Chicago Press, 1989). 64-129. B. Morton "Ghanzi to 1900", unpublished 1995 manuscript. J. Ramsay et.al *Building a Nation.*

[26] BNA S 3/1 "History of the Tswana Tribes" Manuscripts by Moses Malata.

[27] P.R Kirby (edit) *Diary of Dr. Andrew Smith, 1834 to 1836* (Cape Town, Van Riebeeck Society 1939) vol. 1, 279-80 online @ https://repository.nwu.ac.za/handle/10394/14672

[28] Praise Poem of Sebego in Schapera *Praise Poems of Tswana Chiefs*, 148-51.

[29] A. Cuzen "History of Bakgalagadi in the Crownlands north of the Molopo River and West of the Bangwaketse Boundary" in I. Schapera and D.F. van der Merwe *Notes on the Tribal Groupings, History and Customs of the Bakgalagadi,* 183-190.

[30] P. Lemue "Coup d' oeil sur le Kalagari" *Journal des Missions Evangeliques,* vol. 27 (1847) 32, translated and previously cited by B. Morton "Servitude, Slave Trading and Slavery in the Kgalahari", in E. Eldredge and F. Morton (edits) *Slavery in South Africa, Captive Labour in the Dutch Frontier* (Westview a & University of Natal Press, 1994), 215-50.

[31] *Grahamstown Journal* November 30, 1843 "Discovery to the North."

[32] "Joint letter (by Lindley) to Anderson, Grahamstown, 2nd May 1837 in D.J. Kotze (edit.) *Letters of the American Missionaries 1835-1838* (Cape Town, Van Riebeeck Society, 1950), 164-65.

[33] J. Ramsay *The Lost Kingdom -The Rise and Fall of The Ikalanga Monarchy* @ https://www.academia.edu/94151759/THE_LOST_KINGDOM_THE_RISE_AND_FALL_OF_THE_IKALANGA_MONARCHY_1_by_JEFF_RAMSAY

[34] S.M. Molema *Chief Moroka: His Life, His Times, His Country and His People* **(Cape Town,** Methodist Publishing House and Book Depot, 1950), 50.

[35] Sol Plaatje "Moroka" in M. Skota *African Yearly Register*, 62.

[36] I. Schapera (edit.) *David Livingstone South African Papers 1849-1853* (Cape Town, Van Riebeeck Society 1974), 6-28.

[37] I. Schapera (edit) *Livingstone's Missionary Correspondence 1841-56* (London, Chatto & Windus 1961), 23-24.

[38] Account of the visit in *Livingstone's Missionary Correspondence 1841-56,* 33-36.

[39] *Grahamstown Journal* January 6, 1845 "Progress of Discovery".

[40] A praise poem of Gaseitsiwe in Schapera *Praise Poems of Tswana Chiefs*, 156-60. Motsokwane Ruele was a key supporter of Gaseitsiwe, who is here being metaphorically described as one who is a tree without thorns, i.e., one who brings peace and harmony.

[41] According to Schapera, this occurred in 1846, however, Segotshane was reported to be leading the faction during the Batswana-Boer War of 1852-53, see J. Ramsay **"**The

Batswana-Boer War of 1852-53: How the Batswana Achieved Victory" *Botswana Notes and Records* (Gaborone, Botswana Society 1991) https://doi.org/10.10520/AJA052550590_91